



Chateau-sur-Mer, Marble House named national landmarks

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NEWPORT -- Bellevue Avenue's Chateau-sur-Mer, a massive seaside Italianate-style villa, and the Marble House, a former Vanderbilt "summer cottage," have been added to the list of National Historic Landmarks by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The 19th-century mansions join a list of just 42 places in Rhode Island and fewer than 2,500 across the country receiving the special designation, which qualifies the properties for federal financing and tax breaks.

U.S. Sen. Lincoln D. Chafee last fall had petitioned the Interior Department for the distinction on behalf of the Preservation Society of Newport County, which owns Marble House and co-owns Chateau-sur-Mer with Salve Regina University.

Chafee announced the designations Friday at a news conference on the steps of Chateau-sur-Mer, an 1852 villa touted by the preservation society as the landmark of High Victorian architecture, a property previously owned by former Gov. George Peabody Wetmore.

"This is exceptional news for Newport and the people of Rhode Island," Chafee said in a statement. "Placing these two historic sites on the list of National Historic Landmarks will push them into the national spotlight, which will strengthen regional heritage tourism, improve the local economy, and create more jobs."

Chafee added that federal revenue now available for the aging buildings would allow for better maintenance and reconditioning.

The Marble House was built between 1888 and 1892 for Mr. and Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt. The house -- constructed with 500,000 cubic feet of marble -- was intended as a summer home for the icons of American wealth, but became a social and architectural landmark, according to the preservation society.

Chateau-sur-Mer and the Marble House join several other Newport mansions already named National Historic Landmarks, including the Isaac Bell House, The Breakers, The Elms, Hunter House and Kingscote.

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